



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

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EXIT LETTER

October 1, 2019

President Mark Kempic
Bay State Gas Company d/b/a Columbia Gas of Massachusetts
4 Technology Drive, Suite 250
Westborough, MA 01581

Re: D.P.U. 19-PL-24, Lawrence Gas Leak

Dear President Kempic:

On September 27, 2019, the Pipeline Safety Division ("Division") of the Department of Public Utilities ("Department") received a Telephonic Incident Notification from Columbia Gas of Massachusetts ("Columbia Gas") alerting the Department to a Grade I gas leak on a plastic main that Columbia Gas installed during the restoration efforts after the September 13, 2018 gas line event in Merrimack Valley. Several of the Department's Public Utilities Engineers arrived on scene and performed inspections on the 27th, 28th, and 29th of September. The findings of the inspections are highlighted below.

A 2" high pressure plastic main was inserted through an existing, abandoned 6" low pressure main after the September 13, 2018 gas line event. On September 27, 2019, a contractor for the municipal water department exercised a valve on the abandoned main, causing a Grade I gas leak.

The valve from the abandoned main, located at the intersection of S. Broadway and Salem St. could only be exercised because Columbia Gas did not abandon the main as required by the company's procedures (GS 1740.010 2.5) which state "When a distribution main is to be abandoned, valve boxes associated with the abandoned main

(if they exist) shall be removed and the hole filled with a suitable compacting material. If the valve boxes cannot be removed due to their location in concrete or pavement, the valve box lids shall be removed and the valve boxes filled with concrete or other suitable material.”

The federal pipeline safety regulations, 49 C.F.R Part 192, § 192.605(a) states the following:

“Each operator shall prepare and follow for each pipeline, a manual of written procedures for conducting operations and maintenance activities and for emergency response.”

Based on current information, Columbia Gas failed to follow its own procedures abandoning the valve box and, therefore, Columbia Gas violated federal pipeline safety regulations, 49 C.F.R. Part 192. The allegations are set forth below:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Allegations</u>
S Broadway at Salem St Lawrence, MA	49 C.F.R. Part 192, § 192.605

I have forwarded the details of this matter to Division Director Richard Enright.

If you wish to respond to the above statements, please submit your response in electronic format only to Justin.R.Evans@mass.gov, Richard.Enright@mass.gov, and copy Deborah.Hampton@mass.gov within 30 days of the date of this letter. If you have any questions, I can be reached at (857) 348-4048.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Justin R. Evans

Justin R. Evans
Public Utilities Engineer
Pipeline Safety Division

Cc: Richard Enright, Director, Pipeline Safety Division
Martin Poulin, Columbia Gas
Katherine Silver, Columbia Gas